

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-40 were previously cancelled. Claims 41, 42, 49, 51, 55-63, 67, 68, 71, 89, 98 and 99 are amended. Claims 72, 74 and 85 are currently cancelled. Claims 43-48, 50, 52-54, 64-66, 69, 70, 73, 75-84, 86-88, 90-97 and 100-102 are carried forward, all as follows.

Claims 1-40 (Cancelled)

41. (Currently Amended) A printing press comprising:

at least a first printing unit including at least two cylinders defining a printing gap having an inlet area and an outlet area, said at least first printing unit being adapted for imprinter operation wherein in a first operational situation a web is imprinted in said printing gap and in a second operational situation the web is conducted without contact with said at least two cylinders in said printing gap;

a first guide element in said inlet area and a second guide element in said outlet area;

a wall of said at least second guide element, said wall including an outer surface having a surface area defining said guide element; and

a plurality of outward-directed penetrating bores configured as micro-bores openings in said wall, each of said micro-bores openings having a diameter no greater than 500 μm , a density of said plurality of outwardly directed penetrating micro-bores-openings per unit of said surface area being at least-~~lest~~ 0.2/mm², said plurality of outwardly directed penetrating micro-bores-openings being adapted for the exit of a fluid under pressure.

42. (Currently Amended) A printing press comprising:

at least a first printing unit including at least two cylinders defining a printing gap having an inlet area and an outlet area, said at least first printing unit being adapted for imprinter operation wherein in a first operational situation a web is imprinted in said printing gap and in a second operation situation the web is conducted without contact with said at least two cylinders in said printing gap;

a first guide element in said inlet area and a second guide element in said outlet area; and

a load bearing support of an[.] at least partially fluid-permeable support material having a plurality of through-openings, said support material forming said at least second guide element, said at least partially-fluid permeable support material having an outer, non-supporting layer constituted as a micro-porous, air-permeable material having a plurality of micro-openings, said outer, non-supporting layer being located on said at least partially fluid-permeable support material and in fluid communication with said plurality of through openings in said support material in at least an outlet area of said second guide element which is adapted to be contacted by the web, said second guide element being formed as a hollow rod around which air flows.

43. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein each said guide element has a circular profile.

44. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 42 wherein each said guide element has a circular profile.

45. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein each said guide element has a half-shell cross-sectional profile.

46. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 42 wherein each said guide element has a half-shell cross-sectional profile.

47. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein each said guide element has a web-facing side having a cross-sectional profile in the shape of a segment of a circle.

48. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 42 wherein each said guide element has a web-facing side having a cross-sectional profile in the shape of a segment of a circle.

49. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 42 wherein said non-supporting outer layer having said ~~has a~~ plurality of micro-openings is adapted for the exit of fluid under pressure, each said micro-opening having a diameter of no greater than 500 μm .

50. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 49 wherein said micro-openings are open pores of a porous material.

51. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 50-42 wherein said pores have a mean diameter of 5 to 50 μm .

52. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 50 wherein said pores have a mean diameter of 5 to 50 μm .

53. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 51 wherein said mean diameter is between 10 and 30 μm .

54. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 52 wherein said mean diameter is between 10 and 30 μm .

55. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 42 wherein said non-supporting micro-porous material is an open-pored sinter material.

56. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 50 wherein said non-supporting micro-porous material is an open-pored sinter material.

57. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 42 wherein said at least partially fluid-permeable support material has a support face supporting said outer non-supporting layer ~~and a plurality of openings adapted to provide fluid to said outer layer.~~

58. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 42 wherein said outer non-supporting layer has a thickness of less than 1 mm.

59. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 42 wherein said at least partially fluid-permeable support material has a plurality of unconnected fluid passages forming said through-openings and underlying said outer non-supporting layer.

60. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 42 wherein said load bearing support is a support tube with a hollow profile.

61. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 42 wherein a wall of said support material carries said outer, non-supporting layer, said wall having and has a profile with a curvature adapted to a path of travel of the web.

62. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 61-42 wherein said a wall of said support material ~~carries said outer layer and~~ has a curved wall with a profile in the shape of a segment of a circle.

63. (Currently Amended) The printing unit of claim 42 wherein said support material includes a wall having a thickness greater than 3 mm.

64. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 42 wherein said micro-openings constitute between 3% and 30% of said outlet area.

65. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein said diameter of said openings is not greater than 300 μm .

66. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein said wall has a thickness of between 0.2 mm and 3.0 mm.

67. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 41 wherein said plurality of outward-directed penetrating micro-bores ~~openings~~ are adapted to discharge between 1 and 20 cubic meters of fluid per hour for each square meter of said surface.

68. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 49 wherein said micro-openings of said non-supporting outer layer are adapted to discharge between 1 and 20 cubic meters of fluid per hour for each square meter of said surface.

69. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 67 wherein said fluid discharge rate is between 2 and 15 cubic meters of fluid per hour for each square meter of said surface.

70. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 68 wherein said fluid discharge rate is between 2 and 15 cubic meters of fluid per hour for each square meter of said surface.

71. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 42 wherein said outer, non-supporting layer of said micro-porous material is charged with fluid at least 1 bar of excess pressure.

72. (Cancelled)

73. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 71 wherein said fluid has a pressure of at least 4 bar.

74. (Cancelled)

75. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 further including a feed line adapted to feed fluid to said at least second guide element, said feed line having an interior diameter of less than 100 mm.

76. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 49 further including a feed line adapted to feed fluid to said at least second guide element, said feed line having an interior diameter of less than 100 mm.
77. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein each said guide element has an exterior diameter of between 60 and 100 mm.
78. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 49 wherein each said guide element has an exterior diameter of between 60 and 100 mm.
79. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein each said guide element has a length greater than 1,200 mm.
80. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 49 wherein each said guide element has a length greater than 1,200 mm.
81. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein said fluid under pressure is air.
82. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 49 wherein said fluid under pressure is air.
83. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 wherein a portion of said at least second guide element is a releasable insert on a support defined by said wall.

84. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 83 wherein said wall has a profile which is matched to a path of travel of the web.

85. (Cancelled)

86. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 47 wherein said segment of a circle extends over an angle of between 10° and 45° .

87. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 48 wherein said segment of a circle extends over an angle of between 10° and 45° .

88. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 62 wherein said segment of a circle extends over an angle of between 10° and 45° .

89. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 83-85 wherein said segment of a circle extends over an angle of between 10° and 45° .

90. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 47 wherein a width of said at least second guide element is between 30 and 150 mm.

91. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 48 wherein a width of said at least second guide element is between 30 and 150 mm.

92. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 62 wherein a width of said at least second guide element is between 30 and 150 mm.

93. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 85 wherein a width of said at least second guide element is between 30 and 150 mm.

94. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 further including a second printing unit, one of said first and second printing units being adapted to print the web in a first mode of operation of the printing press while the web is conducted without contact through the other of said first and second printing units, and further where, in a second mode of operation, said one printing unit is disengaged from the web and the other of said first and second printing units is in contact with the web.

95. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 42 further including a second printing unit, one of said first and second printing units being adapted to print the web in a first mode of operation of the printing press while the web is conducted without contact through the other of said first and second printing units, and further where, in a second mode of operation, said one printing unit is disengaged from the web and the other of said first and second printing units is in contact with the web.

96. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 further including five printing units through which the web is conducted.

97. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 42 further including five printing units through which the web is conducted.

98. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 41 wherein said micro-~~bores~~-openings are made by accelerated particles.

99. (Currently Amended) The printing press of claim 41 wherein said micro-~~bores~~-openings are made by electron beams.

100. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 41 further including a dirt and ink repelling coating on at least said surface area of said at least second guide element.

101. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 100 wherein said coating is chromium.

102. (Previously Presented) The printing press of claim 101 wherein said surface area is polished to a high gloss.